



March 24, 2016

The Honourable Kathleen Wynne
Room 281, Main Legislative Building, Queen's Park
Toronto, ON, M7A 1A1

Dear Premier Wynne:

The Ontario Mental Health and Addictions Alliance is a coalition of organizations from across the province and across the continuum of care – from community to hospital services and including consumer and family organizations. Our goal is to ensure that mental health and addictions are a provincial government priority.

We would like to commend you and your government for your recent commitment to launching a Basic Income pilot project. As you know, income is a fundamental determinant of health, and alleviating poverty has the potential to greatly improve health outcomes in the province.

This type of intervention is especially significant in the case of people with mental illness and/or addictions, a disproportionate number of whom live in poverty. Too many of these individuals can and want to work but are unable to find employment, hindered by social assistance programs that penalize them for working, or employed in minimum-wage work that leaves them below the poverty line. Evidence suggests that compared to current social assistance programs, a Basic Income Guarantee could dramatically improve standards of living and health outcomes – at less cost to taxpayers. It would be particularly beneficial for people with mental illness and/or addictions and their children.

Again, we thank you for your commitment to this issue. As your government works towards the development and implementation of a Basic Income pilot, the Alliance and its member organizations would be pleased to assist you in any way we can.

Sincerely,

Dennis Long
Chair, Ontario Mental Health and Addictions Alliance
Executive Director, Breakaway Addiction Services

CC: Hon. Eric Hoskins, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
Hon. Deb Matthews, Deputy Premier, Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy
Hon. Charles Sousa, Minister of Finance